Etched in Stone

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Etched in Stone

by Metaphysicalash

Summary

Season 3 AU (kind of)

“Tell me, Will. You keep trying to avoid this, and yet, you crave it. Do you think about me as often as I think about you? When you’re working on your cases?”

“You never leave my mind.”

Hannibal kissed his throat. “The more you try to avoid me, the more I yearn for you.”

Will can't describe his relationship with Hannibal, or whatever it is they have going on. He's definitely drawn to Hannibal but finds it hard to trust him after everything he's done. As if that wasn't complicated enough, things get a lot more complicated when Will meets a striking doppelganger of Hannibal during the case. A carbon copy, except this "twin" of Hannibal is different in personality. Will struggles to keep his senses around him, and struggles to understand why he's intrigued by him. Is it because he looks like Hannibal?

But it's exactly this doppelganger that puts Will's feelings to the test. To see exactly where his heart lies.

Notes

This fic has been in my laptop for almost nine months and I couldn't even get around to it. I finally managed to finish it :') I have no clue what this is, but have it <3 I hope you like this mess.

No betas, unfortunately, so excuse any errors and inconsistencies. They're all mine. I took some liberty with the plotline and the direction and the characters. There are mentions of sculptures and embalming, which I know nothing about. I'm sorry if I got anything wrong 😭

Chapter 1

Will observed the corpse before him, tilting his head at it. The victim was made to sit naked on a chair in a thinking position resembling the famous sculpture of *The Thinker* . The victim, according to the profile, was a man in his late twenties. His body was stiff and cold, his skin ghostly pale. His eyes were half-open, staring at the ground. The way he had been made to sit that way was both fascinating and creepy to Will.

“Looks like someone has a thing for sculptures,” said Beverly. “The place is clean. The body seemingly looks clean. I mean, it's made to look that way."

Zeller peered at the corpse. "It's so creepy."

"That's an understatement," Price added.

"How long ago was the victim murdered?" Jack asked.

"It's kind of hard to tell right now," Zeller replied.

Will peered closely at the body, at the ribs. If one didn’t look close enough, they would miss the faintest of marks, almost camouflaged in the skin. The color difference was extremely slight and the only ones who spotted it after a long, hard look were Beverly and Will. Will gingerly touched the mark, then swiped a gloved finger over it. A layer of what looked like makeup came off on his glove, revealing a deep, grisly stab wound on the body that had been concealed under it. The sight of it made Zeller and Price gag.

"Jesus," Price said. "It's been embalmed."

The makeover was so well done that nobody would have noticed it until they looked hard. Beverly found more stab wounds on the victim’s torso which were well hidden under layers of makeup. She scrunched her face at the wounds.

“That’s just gross,” she said.

“Takes skill to embalm a body,” Will said. “Clearly, our killer knew what he was doing. He has an eye for aesthetics.”

"Quite the perfectionist," Jack added.

"Clearly." Zeller took a closer look at the stab wound. Further observation revealed more of them. "The victim was stabbed three times brutally. Third time, the knife was dragged across his stomach."

Will spotted a white flower near the victim's feet, and picked it up, examining the several tiny petals sticking all around.

"What's this called?" he asked.

"Oh, I know that one," Price replied. "It's an Angelica."

Will hummed.

At that moment, his phone rang. One look at the caller ID and his face promptly dropped with a sigh. He didn't exactly have a problem with Hannibal contacting him per se. What he had a problem with was the other man's possessiveness, his tendency to 'check' on Will, and send him frequent messages inquiring about his location. Of course, it's quite natural for someone to get a little possessive when they are dating, but God, Hannibal took it to a whole new level.

Perhaps dating wasn't the right word for whatever complicated, sexually-charged roller-coaster ride they had going on.

Will moved away from everyone before swiping the screen to answer the phone. He didn't let Hannibal speak. "I'm at a crime scene, for fuck's sake. I told you that before I left."

"Yes, you did," Hannibal replied. "You also forgot my instructions to call me once you got there. It's been long."

"It's only been twenty minutes!"

"Still."

Price and Zeller were too focused on the dead body to listen to Will's conversation. Beverly, on the other hand, stared at him. Will gave her a side-glance, the tips of his ears turning hot with embarrassment when she smirked at him before turning her attention to the corpse.

"What do you want?" he muttered.

"You've been diabolical enough to avoid physical contact for so long, you would now deny me an expression of love too?" Hannibal said. "Do you still feel that way?"

Wow, the man was dramatic. "Twenty. Minutes! We just had a conversation before I left home!"

"It wasn't a proper conversation. You were in a hurry to get out of there. I could drop by at the crime scene—"

"No!" Will glanced at Beverly again, then walked out of the crime scene to a quiet corner. "That's not necessary."

"Isn't it?"

Will closed his eyes, bottling down the rising urge to either smash the phone or smash Hannibal's face, or both. "Fine." He took another cautious look around to make sure nobody eavesdropped. "… Love you."

"What was that? I didn't hear you."

Will clenched his jaw. “You—" He blew a gust of air. “You’re doing this on purpose, you bastard. I know you heard me.”

“You’re going to have to be more specific, Will.”

“I said I love you! Satisfied?”

A second of silence followed before the call ended.

“Son of a—” Will pinched the bridge of his nose.

“You okay?” Beverly asked from behind.

“I’m fine.” Will went back into the crime scene with her.

Love you.

Those words seemed foreign when it came to Hannibal. Will couldn’t describe what he felt about him. They had been in a 'relationship' for three months now, and somehow he felt like he needed more time. He didn’t know what to make of their so-called relationship. It was rocky, like a boat sailing along an incessantly stormy sea, and the biggest reason for that was Hannibal’s possessiveness. It would sometimes reach a point—like it did today—where it would frustrate Will greatly. The obsession began right from the time they had gotten together, and had only deepened with time.

Did he love Hannibal?

It was a question he failed to answer. He always felt a whole array of feelings around Hannibal, feelings he couldn’t put a name to. He needed time to warm up to their relationship, to build a deep bond, but Hannibal wasn’t allowing him the space to. Getting together was partly Will's decision, because for some reason, he was drawn to Hannibal like a magnet. It was a whole other story that Hannibal manipulated him before, and he was kind of doing it now too. He was maneuvering Will's life. How could Will trust a person who had manipulated him at every turn? How could he know he wouldn't do it again?

Will had no idea how he made the decision of being with him. All he knew was that his heart told him to.

His brain was still trying to find the reasoning behind it.

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“Welcome home, Will.” Hannibal greeted him with a smile, while chopping some mushrooms.

Will dropped his jacket on the couch and walked to the open kitchen. “What’s for dinner?”

“Crab cakes, short ribs with black barley and mushrooms, and strawberry créme brûlée for dessert.”

“Sounds delicious already.” Will went around the counter to him and gave a peck to his lips.

Just as he turned around, Hannibal’s voice stopped him. “You can do better than that.”

Will sighed. “I’m tired, Hannibal.”

“You always are. You always pretend to be. Any excuse to avoid any intimate contact. Being together was your decision, Will, in case it slips your mind.”

Will sniggered. "Well, it wasn't entirely my free will, was it? You have a way of influencing my decisions.”

“You could’ve run away.”

“You wouldn’t have let me.”

Hannibal’s smile faded and he glanced at the mushrooms. “Would you want to?"

Will couldn’t answer that. The whole relationship felt like an old belonging he had for many years which he was probably better off without but couldn’t let go. He did feel an undeniable desire for Hannibal. His heart and mind were a mess and he needed time to sort them out.

“Will?”

Hannibal’s voice broke Will’s train of thought.

“I don’t know,” Will blurted, not knowing what to say.

Hannibal scooped up the mushrooms and put them in a bowl, then closed it with a lid and put the knife down. He wiped his hands clean with a napkin. “If your mind’s considering it, you can leave. But what of your heart?”

“Would you let me leave?”

“Only if both your mind and heart are in agreement.”

There was nothing Will could do about his heart. It was a sentient being with a mind of its own.

Hannibal walked close to him, the top two buttons of his wine red shirt left open, revealing a peek of his collarbone. His sleeves were neatly rolled up to his elbows. It was always the little things about him that never failed to awaken something in Will, regardless of his other emotions.

“Is it what you really want?” Hannibal muttered, pinching Will’s chin gently.

“It’s hard to say,” Will whispered.

“That’s because a part of you doesn’t want to leave. You wouldn’t have doubts otherwise.”

Damn him for being irresistible. “You make it hard for me to decide anything.”

“Let me make it easier then.”

Hannibal held Will’s cheek, threading his fingers in those curls. Will leaned into his palm. His hands were always so warm, gentle, but only towards Will.

“You can push me away,” Hannibal whispered.

He kissed Will, and Will instinctively returned it. He’d always close his eyes and feel the warmth of Hannibal’s lips, the tenderness, and then inhale his scent. He always managed to smell so damn fine. And that scent always managed to arouse Will until all he could hear was the loud thumping of his own heart. His fingers had already begun unbuttoning Hannibal’s shirt deftly, like they’d done many times before. Like it was a routine he could do blindly. With the fabric out of the way, Will skimmed his hands up Hannibal’s pec, feeling his nipple rub against his palm.

You can push me away.

Will couldn’t. Hannibal knew that, and Will knew that he knew. It was deliberate. Will wished he could exercise restraint in front of him but damn, every time Hannibal kissed him, every time he touched him, Will’s soul blazed with the intensity of a thousand suns. His body would yearn to meld with Hannibal’s. Become one forever. Hannibal’s breath was the air he breathed, and if only for that moment when they were intimate, Will would lose his ability to think. No matter what he felt about his lover, what doubts he had against him, when they made love, he gave in completely. Everything else went out of the window. The desire was too powerful to resist and he had to admit, Hannibal had a hell of a hold on him.

Hannibal wrapped his fingers around Will’s neck, pushing his chin up with his thumb.

“Tell me, Will. You keep trying to avoid this, and yet, you crave it. Do you think about me as often as I think about you? When you’re working on your cases?”

“You never leave my mind.”

Hannibal kissed his throat. “The more you try to avoid me, the more I yearn for you.”

His lips singed Will’s skin and soothed it at the same time. *God, it infuriated Will to know how much control the man had.*

Hannibal was impatient with Will’s clothes, almost tearing them off. He kissed every part of exposed skin as he undressed him.

Will felt the soft, cushy sofa on his back when Hannibal lay him down on it. Will arched his chest as Hannibal’s moist lips kissed a path down his body, melting into the feel of his long fingers running down the sides. Hannibal’s vehement kisses consumed Will, and the way he worshiped his body was hypnotizing.

Will sucked in a breath as he felt Hannibal’s teeth lightly graze the skin of his cock. He felt the warmth of his mouth running up and down its length. He glanced down to see Hannibal’s head bobbing, his one hand holding Will’s cock in place, while the other was braced on his stomach.

Will licked his lips and sighed, thrusting his hips up.

“God,” he moaned. “I hate it when you try to convince me like this.”

Hannibal took his mouth off his cock with a soft smack. “I’m only bringing out the feelings you keep denying, darling. You are in conflict with yourself. Your words contradict your heart.”

“You said you’d make it easier. This isn’t making it easier.”

Hannibal smiled and moved up to Will’s face, capturing his mouth in a kiss. Pre-come trickled out of Will's cock. He bent his legs, spreading them wide apart like an invitation, and Hannibal gladly accepted. He couldn’t hold himself back anyway, not with his cock that hard.

Hannibal sat up, curling a hand around the other’s throat. His grip was neither too tight nor too gentle, just enough to keep Will’s head pinned to the sofa. Positioning the crown of his cock in Will's hole, he thrust into him with one powerful stroke, evoking a cry from Will. Hannibal didn’t take it easy either, slamming into him over and over, as if taken over by a sudden rush of overpowering lust.

"Ahh, fuck, Hannibal!" Will moaned at the initial burn, which disappeared quickly, and was replaced with a sweet fullness.

Will saw that lust glinting in his eyes, along with a familiar tinge of darkness that made Hannibal *Hannibal* . He saw the silver strands of hair falling down his face, and his facial features hardening. Hannibal's cock pulled out and plunged back in deeper each time, stroking and rubbing Will's sensitive flesh, and Will couldn't move too much with the hand on his throat. Maybe he liked it that way. Maybe he liked the constriction, the feel of those fingers wrapped around his neck. He liked surrendering control to Hannibal and putting his unwavering focus on the man above him.

Hannibal leaned down and kissed him again, first on his lips, and then his cheek. His lips moved to Will's ear, brushing against it when he whispered,

"I love you."

He said it so earnestly it stung Will, like a knife slowly piercing his chest, inching deeper and deeper into his heart. The look in Hannibal's eyes made it worse. Will couldn't say it back. Hell, he couldn't say anything coherent in a time like this. Not when Hannibal was too full, too thick, too deep inside him, driving him right out of his mind.

Hannibal moved his hand from Will's throat down to stroke his leaking cock, the pad of his thumb rubbing the slick crown.

"Tell me what you feel," he purred.

"Ah, I…" Will whimpered. "I feel overwhelmed." He held Hannibal's face in his hands and kissed him hard. “I want you right now.”

Will gripped him tighter, pressing his body to his. Hannibal powered into him a few times, hips jerking as he came inside him in long, hot, creamy spurts. Will followed a moment later, brought to climax by Hannibal's steady stroking. He spilled all over his stomach and Hannibal's hand.

Hannibal relaxed, dropping his head to Will's chest while the other stroked the back of his head. Their heavy breathing was in sync.

Hannibal raised his head to look at him, bringing a hand to brush his curls back.

"It's funny how the truth comes out in the heat of passion," he said.

"It's not fair to coax it out of me like that," Will replied, breathy.

"You leave me no choice. Why are you so distant from me?"

"I didn't get time to adjust to this relationship, or whatever it is we got going on. We just jumped right into it. And considering our history, it's hard for me to adapt."

"Don't let the past influence your present."

"It's easy for you to say. After everything you did, it's hard for me to—"

"Trust me?"

Will sighed. "I don't know… I'm trying to figure this out."

"You're holding on to the past. You think it's going to repeat itself, that I would deceive you again. But what motive do I have?"

"Hannibal…"

"Do you love me, Will?"

Though that question wasn't unexpected, it still struck Will on the head like a jagged bolt of lightning. The uncertainty was frustrating. He wished he had a simpler answer than—

"I don't know."

Hannibal placed a hand to Will's chest, feeling the mad pounding inside. "I can tell you crave me. I don't understand why you resist it."

Because Will had once trusted him, only to be betrayed by him. He couldn't tell what was true or false when it came to him. He thought those wounds had healed, but they were still

raw, still stinging. It wasn't easy to forget all of what he'd been through. The pain resurfaced, just when he thought he'd effectively buried it.

His eyes misted over. "Because it hurts."

A tinge of surprise crossed Hannibal's face, followed by pain. His lips moved, trying to utter some words.

"I will make dinner," was all that came out.

Hannibal moved off him and from the sofa, putting his clothes on. Will sighed, pinching his eyes. It wasn't his intention to upset him but it was hard to hold the truth back. He watched Hannibal walk into the kitchen, wash and clean his hands, then open the lid of the bowl of mushrooms and continue cooking. Sitting up, Will went up to their room, to the wardrobe and grabbed a clean t-shirt and shorts.

There was a gaping distance between them, like two continents divided by a vast ocean. Will felt the agony of staying apart and the uncertainty of their relationship. It was more complicated considering he couldn't let go of Hannibal either.

Can't live with him, can't live without him.

***

"Holy shit." Beverly eyed the armless and headless corpse of a woman in front of her.

"Gets more vivid each time, doesn't it?" Jack said, hands in his coat pocket.

Price and Zeller were already on the scene, next to the corpse.

The decapitated body of an unknown woman, with her arms severed, had wings attached to her back, and thin fabric covering her body. Thicker folds of fabric covered her lower body. The body was propped up against a tree. Zeller pointed to a couple of stab wounds on the victim's chest, which was covered by embalming.

"I'm guessing the victim was stabbed first and then decapitated," Zeller said. "The body had been embalmed, like the previous victim."

"Made to look like a sculpture like the previous one," Will observed the body. "I believe this is the Winged Victory of Samothrace."

"Our killer really has a lot of time in his hands," Price added.

And just like the previous victim, Will found a flower at the victim's feet. Except this time, it was a different flower. One he recognized—a red carnation.

Beverly looked at the back of the body. "The wings have been glued on with a strong adhesive."

"So, someone who loves art. He does it with a lot of care and attention to details," Will said. He stood directly in front of the corpse, staring closely at it. "After his effort, I can imagine he spends a moment staring at his work. Admiring it."

"Why does that sound familiar?" Jack said.

Will glanced back, to see Jack looking right at him. He knew what Jack implied and honestly, it was kind of getting on his nerves.

"Not everything is Hannibal," he said.

"And yet, everything seems like him," Jack replied.

He still had his suspicions about Hannibal, long after the man had been released from prison. It took a lot of effort for Will to prove that the evidence pointing to Hannibal being the Chesapeake Ripper was false. He didn't know how he managed to pull it off either. Jack wasn't convinced so easily. Even now, he still had an eye on Hannibal.

It had become difficult for Hannibal to go on hunts as usual and Will had to accompany him. At least for a little while, until the heat died down and Jack's suspicions eventually dissipated. That wasn't easy, though. Crawford was stubborn. Hannibal and Will had to be careful.

Will's phone rang. He pulled it out and saw his lover’s name flash on the screen. He stole a furtive glance at Jack who was still eyeing him like a hawk, before walking away to speak in private.

"What?" he answered in a low voice.

"Your tone sounds rude, Will," Hannibal spoke.

"I'm at a crime scene and Jack's here."

"He still suspects me?"

"What do you think?"

"I think it's hard to convince him of anything once he's made up his mind. I'm going out for a bit in the evening, to get us dinner."

"I'm coming with you."

"Your concern is flattering but that won't be necessary. I can handle it."

"Things are different now. You don't have a choice but to take me along."

There was a pause.

"What?" Will asked.

"Nothing," Hannibal replied. "You always try to be distant from me, yet you insist on staying with me. I can't fathom your intentions."

"I'm being cautious, that's all. I'll see you after work."

"Alright."

Will cut the call and sighed. It had been a huge ordeal these past months. Keeping Hannibal out of trouble took effort, and sometimes got frustrating, especially when Hannibal couldn't control his… dark instincts. Jack keeping a close watch on Hannibal wasn't making things any easier.

Will turned around and walked to Beverly. "This isn't the second victim. It's the third. Remember that body we found three weeks ago?"

"You mean the one that was made to look like Michaelangelo's *David* ," Beverly replied.

Will nodded. "Yeah, that victim had a red rose lying near his feet."

"I remember."

Will glanced at the corpse in front of them. "The killer's watching us."

"What makes you say that?"

"He's all about presentation, and paying attention to details. Making victims into sculptures and displaying them in the open. He craves attention. He wants us to admire his work. Of course he'll keep an eye on us."

"Frankly, sounds like someone I know."

Will gave her a look. "Jesus Christ, Bev, not you too."

She shrugged. "It's hard not to think of Hannibal whenever such crimes are committed."

Will shook his head. "I gotta go. Call me when you find something."

***

Evening fell.

Hannibal was packing his kit, preparing for the hunt. Will stood by and watched in silence.

"You don't have to come along, Will," Hannibal said. "You seem distracted."

"It's just the case."

"I'd know when you're distracted by a case. This is something else. Something's bothering you."

Will sighed. "It's a serial killer who turns his victims into famous sculptures. He's meticulous and has an eye for details. Presentation. It reminded Beverly and Jack of you."

Hannibal put his transparent plastic suit on. "What did you say to them?"

"Nothing."

"Did the killer remind you of me?"

"Kind of."

"At the very least, you think of me."

Will raised his eyebrows. "You always have the last words."

"Did you find any clues?"

"Not yet, but the killer leaves a flower at the feet of his victims. A different one each time. The first was a rose. The second was an Angelica. The third was a red carnation."

Hannibal's brows slightly pulled together, as if thinking for a moment. "Angelicas symbolize inspiration, and red carnations can have many meanings—affection, love, admiration."

"Admiration." It's the one word that grabbed Will's attention. The placement of the flowers now seemed to make sense to him. "Inspiration. We found a victim whose body was posed in a way to represent The Thinker. So, our killer was… inspired somehow?"

"Takes inspiration to kill and embalm his victims in that way."

"Then the recent victim who was decapitated, with the red carnation at her feet. The flower represents his admiration for his work."

Will's phone buzzed in his pocket. He fished it out and glanced at Beverly's name on the screen.

"So, which one of them is it?" Hannibal half-smiled. "Beverly or Jack?"

Will simply returned the half-smile before answering the phone, "Bev?"

"Will, there was a 911 call," Beverly said. "We have a man here who says somebody broke into his house and tried to kill him. He had a narrow escape. And… it seems the intruder dropped a flower."

"Is it the same killer?"

"Too early to say. The house we're at is about ten minutes away from the last body we found." There was a pause. "You need to get here. I… I have no clue what to say. You just need to see this for yourself."

"Alright, I'll be there."

"You need to go," Hannibal said, after Will cut the call. "Sounds important."

"It's not a good idea for you to go alone."

"You think I'm incapable of taking care of myself?"

"I never said that. I want you to…" Will paused briefly, reconsidering the weight of his next words. Speaking them would show the obvious—that deep down, he cared about him. "I want you to be safe."

He expected some kind of remark from Hannibal for that, but the other man simply smiled. "I will be."

Will awkwardly nodded before leaving. If he stayed a second longer, he would never leave Hannibal's side.

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Will pulled over his car in front of a two-storey house. Beverly stood by the front door with her hands tucked into her jacket pockets. A scarf was wrapped snug around her neck and a dark blue beanie protected her head from the biting cold. She looked bewildered, a bit spooked, like she'd seen a ghost.

Will pulled his trench coat close and walked to her. "What's going on? Where's the witness?"

"You tell me." She jutted her chin towards the open door.

Will went into the house, passing by Crime Scene Analysts taking pictures and Forensics picking up evidence from the floor. Shards of glass from the broken windows littered the floor, along with a broken vase and a small fallen table. Will walked into the living room where Zeller and Price were speaking to a blond-haired man seated near the table, who spoke with a strangely familiar voice and accent. His back was turned to Will. The two of them shared the same expression of bewilderment as Beverly did. As Will approached, Zeller and Price looked at him but didn't say anything. The next second, the blond man turned around to look at Will.

And Will froze in his tracks.

His mouth parted and his eyes widened, his brows pulling together. He glanced at Zeller and Price, both of whom shrugged their shoulders. The man shifted in his chair so he was

properly facing Will, and all Will could do was stare at him, dumbstruck. He couldn't figure out if his eyes were deceiving him.

"Hannibal?" he blurted softly.

Chapter 2

The man pushed his glasses up as he frowned in confusion. "I'm sorry. Who?"

"It's not him," Zeller said to Will. "Although the resemblance is freakishly uncanny."

To Will, it looked like someone put Hannibal in a cloning machine. Because the man sitting in front of him was a carbon copy of his lover. A splitting image, right down to the Lithuanian lilt in the accent. His blond hair fell in bangs down his forehead. He had the same cheekbones, the same glinting amber eyes, the same lips. Perhaps the only difference would be the thin, rectangular-framed glasses.

Will brought his disarrayed mind back into focus. "What's… your name?"

"Gabriel," the man replied, his voice echoing in Will's ears.

It was almost surreal to see another 'Hannibal'. Beverly walked in, standing nearby.

"What happened?" Will asked Gabriel.

"I had just come home from work," Gabriel answered, gingerly touching his split lip, from where a thin streak of blood had trickled to his chin. "I was in the kitchen when I heard a sound. Sounded like footsteps. It was really faint, so I thought I was imagining it. But I went into the hall to check anyway. At first, there was no one there. I turned around, and next thing I knew, a man in a mask attacked me. Hit me on the head." He pointed to a cut on his forehead.

"Go on."

"I fought back. At least, I tried to. You can see the result of the fight around you. He was strong. Fast. I couldn't keep up. He had disabled the door alarm, but I managed to get it back on, and alert the police."

"The killer escaped through the back door." Price gestured to the direction of the back door. "We found trace footprints on the floor near it."

Will glanced at the table and spotted a pink, swirly flower. Not a rose, but something else.

"It's a Ranunculus," Price said. "They're also called Buttercups."

"The killer leaves a specific flower each time," Will said. "Each one symbolizes something. The flowers we found with the last two victims symbolized inspiration and admiration respectively. It's like he's leaving a message through them."

"Well, in that case, Buttercups symbolize charm. It's like telling someone how charming they are, which is kind of an odd message to leave here."

Will pondered. "Maybe this wasn't a message for Gabriel."

Assuming this was the killer they were after, the flower message might've meant for someone else. Maybe.

"I'm sorry I'm not that helpful," Gabriel said. "I wish I saw his face."

"No, it's fine," Will said, getting whiplash merely from hearing him speak. "He created quite a mess here. We might find some clues."

Gabriel nodded, then stared at Will with a familiar glimmer of fascination that Will had seen in Hannibal's eyes the first time he had met him. The fascination which had turned into attraction quickly. Will found himself staring back longer than necessary, feeling the same rush of his heartbeat as the day Hannibal first came to his house. He finally tore his gaze away, still trying to grasp the existence of his lover's doppelganger. An actual doppelganger.

It was trippy.

Will looked at Beverly then slightly jerked his head at the front door as an indication for her to follow him. The two of them walked out of the house. Will rubbed his face and then rubbed his hands together, blowing a long gust of air.

"Yeah," Beverly said. "I know exactly what you're thinking right now."

"It's crazy." Will raised his eyebrows. "There's two of them."

"Except one of them is not a serial killer."

"We don't know that yet."

"Just because he looks exactly like Hannibal, doesn't mean he has to act exactly like him too. And maybe Hannibal's occupying way too much space in that head of yours."

"You're not wrong."

Gabriel exited the house and walked to them. "I'm sorry, am I interrupting?"

"Not… at all," Beverly said.

"Could I speak to um, Agent—" Gabriel gestured to Will.

"Will Graham," Will answered.

"Agent Graham, in private?" Gabriel added.

Beverly's gaze darted between them. "Um, sure."

She went back into the house, leaving the two men together.

For some reason, a whole new wave of strange sensations washed over Will from merely standing near Gabriel. He could barely look the man in the eye, only doing so for a split-

second. The man shared the same beauty as Hannibal too. It wouldn't surprise Will if Gabriel was Hannibal's long-lost twin or something.

"Is it alright if I can have your contact?" Gabriel asked. "In case if I remember anything, I could give you a call. I want to be of some help. If that's alright with you."

His eyes were warm, nothing to hide. He looked as though he wasn't holding out any expectations. Like he wouldn't force Will to do something he didn't want to. Will knew exactly why he was asking for his number, and in part, it wasn't for helping with the case. And yet, somehow Will couldn't refuse him. He took a piece of paper and scribbled his number on it before handing it to Gabriel, who put it in his pocket.

"Great," Gabriel said, a bit sheepishly. "I'll definitely keep in touch. About the case, of course."

Will simply nodded. "Get those cuts on your face looked at."

It was like seeing a softer version of Hannibal, which was downright bizarre. This case just got weirder.

***

"Will," Hannibal muttered, his breath gently fanning over Will's spine as they lay on the bed.

"Mm?" Will mumbled softly.

"You've been preoccupied lately."

"You know why."

"The case is troubling you more than usual. You don't discuss your cases as often as you used to."

The dynamic of a psychiatrist and a patient, of two friends, which they used to share had changed. They had come a long way. Will didn't know what to say. He sometimes missed the old times, before the Ripper drama and the lies and manipulations, when he'd blindly trusted Hannibal with every secret he had. Even in those fleeting moments when they would discuss other things than cases, Will would feel completely at ease around him. His naive self thought Hannibal was his best friend.

How else would he describe him? Hannibal was the only person around whom he'd smile and laugh, and that was saying a lot. He wished he could bring those times back.

Will realized he'd been silent for a little too long when Hannibal cuddled closer, arm slightly tightening around Will's body. Will lay on the bed, facing the other way, face half-hidden in his pillow. He felt Hannibal's lips on his spine, just below the back of his neck.

"Won't you talk to me?" Hannibal whispered, kissing Will's shoulder.

Will sighed and melted from the kiss. It was no use avoiding the conversation.

"There was a witness," he said. "He was attacked by the killer we were looking for, or at least, I assume it is our killer because we found a flower in the house, just like with the previous victims."

"What kind of a flower?"

"Ranunculus."

"It symbolizes charm."

"Price guessed that too. The witness… Gabriel was his name. He looks just like you."

"Is that so? Similarities can be found between several people."

"This isn't a similarity. He is a splitting image of you. A doppelganger."

An uneasy silence fell. Will fought the urge to turn around and see Hannibal's face to check his reaction.

"I see," Hannibal replied. "How did that make you feel?"

Will wondered if he should tell the truth, because the truth was, he was strangely turned on by Gabriel. Obviously, it was only a fleeting, superficial sensation and nothing more, but still, he wondered what kind of consequences the truth would get him. Would Hannibal feel jealous? Or would he emphasize how Will could never stop thinking about him, that he saw him wherever he went, which meant his feelings for him were concrete?

Both, perhaps?

Lying might work on a short term, but Hannibal's experience with psychology would pick it up quickly. The curiosity creeping in Will wanted to know how Hannibal would react if he told him the truth.

"I don't know," he said. "Strange, I guess?" *It was a partial truth.*

"To see my twin in existence, I highly doubt it was simply strange, Will. What did you really feel?"

"I told you, it was strange. That's it."

Hannibal kissed Will's shoulder again, running a hand down his arm and slipping to the front to hold his cock. Will swallowed, clenching the sheets in his fist as Hannibal stroked him, his fist running up and down the hardening flesh.

Hannibal had no sense of timing when it came to these. He never held back when he wanted Will carnally, and that outburst of lust and passion consumed Will as well. It pulled him into

its sweet trap until he couldn't get out. He never wanted to either. It was funny how he told Hannibal he needed time, that he needed to move on from the past, and yet, when push came to shove, Will chose to be with him each time. It frustrated him, mostly because he knew Hannibal had done him wrong, had hurt him so many times, but Will still fucking fell for him.

He had been distant from Hannibal all this time because of that very reason. The conflicting emotions inside him ticked him off. On one hand, he wanted to punch the hell out of Hannibal. On the other, he wanted to kiss him forever.

"Hannibal, stop," he whispered, not wanting his desire to get the better of him.

"Why?" Hannibal's lips brushed against his ear. "Are you thinking about him?"

"What? No!" Will clenched his teeth. "Ahh, God." He involuntarily thrust his hips forward, pushing his cock through Hannibal's fist.

Hannibal stroked him harder now, giving a little squeeze every now and then. Will leaned back against him, his back pressed to Hannibal's hard chest. A trail of pre-come trickled from Will's cock to Hannibal's fingers.

Withdrawing his hand, Hannibal caught Will's shoulder and rolled him onto his back. Will caught the hardened features of his lover's face, illuminated by the moonlight.

"I can tell when you're lying to me," Hannibal spoke in a low tone.

His mouth enveloped Will's, his teeth tugging and nipping at the other's tender lips. The kiss was rough and scorching, but Will took it. He was well aware of Hannibal's possessiveness. Anyone so much as cast a furtive glance at Will in a wrong way was the next unfortunate victim in Hannibal's rolodex. So, Will could imagine what might happen to someone who tried to flirt with him.

Hannibal might be equanimous on the outside, but only Will knew the extent of his emotions inside. He knew what triggered him.

"Tell me, Will." Hannibal's warm breaths gusted over Will's mouth. "What was that strange feeling you had? Perhaps you were turned on by my doppelganger."

He was literally stealing the words from Will's head. Right now, Will was highly aroused by Hannibal's rough love-making and slightly concerned about his silent envy.

Hannibal slipped two fingers inside Will's hole, stretching him open. Will arched his chest with a moan. Then gasped. Hannibal took his erect nipple into his mouth, biting the furled tip. Will let out a thready cry, grinding his hips to Hannibal's fingers.

"H-Hannibal," he whimpered. "Please."

"Tell me," Hannibal said.

Heat blazed in his body, and sweat misted on it. Hannibal delved deeper inside him, slipping a third finger into the bundle of nerves inside Will.

More pre-come spilled out of Will's cock, heavily now, onto his stomach. He writhed on the bed. "Ah, fuck! God, I—"

Hannibal kissed Will's stinging lips before taking his fingers out. He lifted one of Will's legs and placed them over his shoulder, and without warning, slammed his cock into Will. Will cried out as his lover thrust into him with powerful strokes, going deeper each time. He couldn't tell if Hannibal was driven by desire or jealousy. Either way, he liked it. As Hannibal leaned down, Will grabbed his face and pulled him down for a kiss, moaning into his mouth and urging him on. He might be conflicted about their relationship, but he sure as hell was certain about the sex. He couldn't resist it. Couldn't resist him.

Hannibal growled as he came inside him, filling him up with hot, creamy spurts. Will joined him, coating their stomachs with his release.

"Jesus…" Will breathed.

"I struggle to believe that when seeing a mirror image of me, all you felt was 'strange'," Hannibal said.

"Look, I didn't feel anything about him. I don't even know him!"

He slid off him and settled on the bed. The silence that followed was so uncomfortable that Will was compelled to speak, but didn't know what to say. Hannibal's eyes were closed, his chest heaving with heavy breaths. His Adam's apple bobbed and his lips were parted in such a provocative way that Will couldn't tear his gaze away from him.

"Goodnight." Hannibal turned to his side, back facing Will.

Will let out a barely perceptible huff and raked a hand through his dark curls. The only reason Hannibal would get jealous so quickly over something he didn't know much about was because Will was being distant from him.

Hannibal usually had the last words. He would argue and debate in his own way, and Will was used to that. But in times like these when he didn't speak much…

It troubled Will.

***

The only reason Will answered Gabriel's call in the morning was because the other man said he had something. Information he claimed might be useful to the case.

Will parked his car in front of the contemporary luxurious abode Gabriel lived in and walked up to the front door. It was a mystery why he felt restless. Slightly nervous. The door opened and Will's heart lurched when he saw a half-naked Gabriel at the doorway, wearing only a pair of track pants. He wasn't wearing his glasses. His damp, blond hair hung down his forehead, and his sturdy physique shimmered with sweat.

For fuck's sake, the man's presence was a jumpscare.

Will thought he had his composure intact. He couldn't be more wrong.

"Agent," Gabriel said, dabbing his neck with a towel. "Glad you're here. Please come in."

Will's eyes shamelessly and disobediently darted to Gabriel's chest hair and pecs before he forcefully averted his gaze.

"You said you had some information," he said.

"I did," Gabriel replied. "But we are no hurry, right?"

"I am. This is a serial killer. I want to stop him before he hurts more people. I don't have the luxury of idling."

"Alright. At least, let me put some clothes on. I'd been working out before you came here. Please have a seat."

Gabriel led him into a spacious living room and gestured to the sofa, but Will preferred to stand. As the other man went upstairs, Will paced about the room, staring at family photos. Gabriel seemed like the typical family man, posing next to his parents and his sister. A lot of the photos were family vacations, and high school and college achievements. The bookshelves were lined with soccer medals and trophies, along with medals for arts.

So, he paints. Just like Hannibal.

This is getting trippier by the minute.

A moment later, Gabriel came back downstairs, dressed in a fresh t-shirt, and jeans.

"Where's your family?" Will asked.

"Abroad," Gabriel replied. "They're home in Paris. Can I get you anything? Coffee, maybe?"

"Thanks, but I'm in a hurry."

Gabriel smiled. "No, you're not. Look, I'm happy to have you here. At least, have some coffee. I'll gladly tell you what I know."

Will agreed a bit reluctantly. "Fine."

Gabriel went to the open kitchen to make some coffee while Will moved to stand just outside of it.

"If I may ask, has there been a new victim?" Gabriel asked.

"No," Will replied, trying to keep the conversation brief.

He had to. Gabriel was too fucking distracting. Will tried to shift his focus to something else, but it went right back to him when Gabriel came to him with two mugs of black coffee. Will received a mug.

"Thanks," he said. "So what's the information you found?"

Gabriel sighed. "You really can be persistent. Alright. It's right here." He went to the wooden chest and picked up something lying on top of it, then went back to Will. "It's a piece of cloth. I found it near the drawer. Must've torn during the struggle, while I was trying to save myself from the killer. It's not from any of my clothes."

Will took the cloth from his hand, peering closely at the blood stains on it. An analysis could help find out whose blood it is. It was a good start.

"Thank you," he said.

"You can thank me by having a proper drink with me sometime," Gabriel replied warmly with a smile.

Something in the way he spoke enticed Will, exactly like the way Hannibal spoke. It was almost surreal. Will avoided eye contact with him so he wouldn't have those strange feelings from before but that didn't make a difference at all. Merely standing close to him made Will's skin tingle. His blue eyes flitted to Gabriel's for a split-second, and that was enough to make his heart flutter. He hoped the man wouldn't touch him.

Get out of there.

"Thanks for the coffee." Will kept the mug on the table.

“You barely took a sip,” Gabriel said.

“Yeah, I’m in a hurry right now. Need to get back to the case.”

When Will exited the house, he exhaled a long breath. His pulse raced. He shoved his hands in his coat pockets, as if that would make it any better.

Gabriel's voice stopped him right in his tracks. "Wait."

Will turned around but didn't look at him.

"I'm sorry if I was being too straightforward, I didn't mean to drive you away," Gabriel replied.

"No, you weren't. It's fine."

Gabriel cocked his head. "Mind if I am straightforward then?"

Will wanted to shake his head but nodded instead.

"You are captivating, Agent Graham," Gabriel replied. "Something about you just… stands out. But I like that. I like a good mystery."

Will felt his pulse in his throat. He gave another awkward nod before walking away, in case it got any more… tense. Gabriel kept staring at him with a smile and enticing eyes as he sipped his coffee until Will got into his car and left the place.

Chapter 3

"Are you alright?" Beverly asked.

"I'm fine," Will replied.

"Is it your usual kind of 'fine'?"

"Nothing more."

"So, forensics did find a match to the blood stains on that piece of cloth. They belong to a Michael Clifton."

Will frowned as he tried to recollect why that name sounded familiar to him. "Isn't that the guy who murdered three people last month?"

"He was accused of it, but we were never able to prove anything against him then. Now we might be able to. The MO is a close match as well. I suppose this is all thanks to Gabriel."

"Hm… yeah."

Beverly sent a questioning glance. "You okay?"

"Yeah. I am."

"Or are you spooked seeing two versions of your boyfriend?"

Will blew out a gust of air. "Is everyone going to keep bringing that up?"

"It's trippy, of course everyone would. I'm surprised you're being so casual about it."

"I'm not casual. It caught me off guard too, but that doesn't mean I need to overre—" Will's gaze flitted away from Beverly and fell on Hannibal, who was walking towards them.

His sudden presence made Will's pulse race again, mostly because he just saw Hannibal's fucking twin a few moments ago. It was making his head spin. Along with the fleeting shock came a stab of anxiety to see Hannibal taking the risk of showing up at the BAU. This was the last place he needed to be. If Jack saw him, he wouldn't be pleased to say the least.

Beverly was uncomfortable with Hannibal's presence but unlike Jack, she was a bit more understanding. She shared Will's concern.

"You've got some balls," she said to Hannibal.

"Good to see you too, Agent Katz. I came here to see Will," Hannibal said. "He wasn't answering his phone so I thought I'd check up on him."

Hannibal sent a subtle questioning glance to Will.

"My phone was on silent," Will replied, then looked at Beverly. "We need to bring Clifton in for questioning. We don't have a lot of concrete evidence right now, so we can't jump to conclusions. He might or might not be the killer we're looking for."

"Alright," Beverly said. She side-eyed Hannibal before walking away.

Will's lips thinned to a hard line. "Are you insane? Showing up where you're not supposed to?"

"You didn't give me much of a choice," Hannibal replied.

"Yeah well, as you can see, I'm at work."

"Did that work involve going to Gabriel's house?"

Will stilled. He fought the urge to close his eyes because that would make it more obvious. He shouldn't be surprised Hannibal found out what he was up to, and yet, it disconcerted him. He imagined Hannibal lurking around in plain sight while Gabriel outright flirted with him. If Will didn't think this could get complicated before, it certainly got complicated now.

"You followed me?" he asked.

"I wanted to see my doppelganger," Hannibal replied.

"By stalking me?"

"I didn't think you would willingly introduce me to him if I asked you."

"Will!" Came a voice from somewhere.

Will turned around, mentally slapping his forehead when he saw Jack approaching. Jack's eyes darkened when he saw Hannibal, and his pace slowed a bit, like he was about to pull a gun and shoot Hannibal on the spot. Hannibal met his gaze with an airy unconcern which ruffled Jack's feathers. Will sighed softly, hoping this might not take a wrong turn. He inched a bit closer to his lover, ready to protect him if needed.

"What is he doing here?" Jack asked.

"He came here to see me," Will replied.

"Well, if he's done, he can leave."

"I'm not done, Jack," Hannibal replied, as much as Will wished he didn't. "I came here to talk to him."

Will had to change the subject quickly. "We have a lead on the killer. Michael Clifton. We are going to bring him in."

"The one who killed three people last month?" Jack asked.

"Yeah," Will replied. "All evidence points to him. This is our only shot."

"Alright." Jack shot a sullen look at Hannibal.

"I'll take it from here. Don't worry." Will grabbed his lover's arm and took him from there before Jack could say anything more.

Hannibal couldn't stop the subtle but smug smile on his face when Will pulled him along. Any physical contact with him, even the slightest, always thrilled him. It thrilled him even more when Will took his side in front of Jack. Sooner or later, the profiler would give in to his feelings.

When that time comes, Hannibal would consider it a personal victory.

***

Michael Clifton was dangerous, as was proved by his previous murders, so naturally, Will, Beverly and One FBI agent with them were armed and ready. Beverly was the best shot among them, and Will trusted her to have his back. Hannibal was the uninvited guest tagging along with them.

Beverly leaned in to Will and whispered, "It's not a good idea to bring him along."

"I can hear you clearly, Agent Katz," Hannibal replied.

Beverly huffed lightly. "You're not supposed to be here."

"I will leave if Will wishes me to."

Will half-turned his head towards Hannibal, feeling his gaze at his temple. As he looked at Beverly, he caught her side-glancing at him.

"We've come too far," he said. "Let's focus on Michael."

Beverly unwillingly went with it. They moved stealthily along the front yard, guns held out in front of them. Will eyed the windows, hoping Michael wouldn't spot them too soon. It was hard to avoid the windows when there were several. Will stole a glance behind him to make sure Hannibal was following, then gestured to Beverly to go around and take the back door. With a silent nod, she split up and went around. The other agent followed her.

Will crept to the front door, and stopped near it. He gave Hannibal a brief look before stepping back and launching a kick on the door. The door burst open and he charged in, snapping the gun up.

"Michael Clifton! FBI!" he bellowed.

No one was there. Will moved through the foyer into the living room, eyes peeled out for any movement.

All of a sudden, Hannibal grabbed hold of his jacket. A gunshot fired from somewhere as Hannibal yanked Will behind a wall. Will only caught a glimpse of Michael holding a gun, half-hiding in the bedroom. Hannibal had sensed his presence much quicker than Will.

Will gasped as his back hit the wall and Hannibal pressed his palms on either side of the profiler's head, shielding him from any harm. His face was mere inches apart from him. Will swallowed, then forced his senses back and leaned out from behind the wall, firing back at Michael. Michael retreated into the bedroom.

Beverly barged in. Just as Michael came out of the bedroom to fire, all it took was one precise shot from her gun right to his leg to bring him down.

Hannibal caught Will's face. "Are you alright?"

"Yes." Will's gaze darted to Hannibal's left arm, seeing his sleeve ripped and blood staining his coat. "You're hit."

"It's superficial."

"Doesn't look superficial. You didn't even flinch. Why the hell did you do that? You could've died."

"I care about your life."

Will briefly glanced at Beverly who kicked away Michael's gun, while training hers on him. Another cop rushed in and handcuffed him. Beverly made sure he was secured and had nowhere to run before coming to Will.

"You okay?" she asked, raising an eyebrow at the profiler and the man holding him to the wall. "You guys need a room?"

Will shook his head and moved away from Hannibal. "I'm fine. He's hit."

A cop arrived at that moment, holding a bunch of flowers in his hand. "Found these in the shed out in the back."

Beverly frowned at the flowers. "These are the same ones we saw at the crime scenes of the previous victims."

"We got him," Will said. "Get him inside the car."

Hannibal lowered his arms to his side, least fazed at the stream of red dripping off his fingertips. Will could only focus on that, and the bubbling fear inside him caused by the thought that if Hannibal was a few inches to the left, the bullet would've hit his back clean. Maybe his spine.

Holstering his gun, he took Hannibal's arm and led him into the kitchen, hoping to find something, anything, to staunch the bleeding. All he found was a hand towel, but it should do. Will grabbed it and wrapped it around Hannibal's arm, making sure to knot it tight.

All the while, Hannibal gazed at him in silence.

Will met his gaze. "What?"

"Nothing," Hannibal replied. "Simply the fact that we're always tethered to each other, no matter how much we try to distance ourselves."

Will knew he was right. He knew how pointless it was stretching the gap between them. It was inevitable that he wouldn't be able to handle it if something bad happened to Hannibal.

It was time he accepted that.

***

At home, Will nursed Hannibal's arm, gently wrapping it in gauze after cleaning it. He briefly glanced at Hannibal's naked torso then tore his gaze away because it was way too distracting.

"You should be more careful next time," he said.

"I don't see the point in my safety when you don't want me," Hannibal replied. “Is there any point?”

Will stopped and glanced at him. Those words were surprisingly sharper than he expected, piercing through his chest like he was made of butter. It hurt a lot when Hannibal said that. Will didn't expect the impact his words would have on him.

"Thank you," Hannibal said, once Will was done patching him up.

He put his red sweater on and went to his piano. He sat near it and began playing a melancholy tune, beautiful and heartbreaking. It was Hannibal's way of expressing emotions. Things he couldn't say out loud. Things only Will would understand.

Will sat there, feeling the weight of regret on his shoulders. True, Hannibal did hurt him a lot in the past, but… he regretted the way he'd been treating him for the past few months. Hannibal was clearly seeking his forgiveness. Will saw that and yet, denied it to him. He wouldn't have given a flying shit about any of it if he truly didn't care about Hannibal. But he did. He cared a lot.

And it hurt.

He rose and went to him, sitting next to him near the piano and watching him play. Will stared at Hannibal's slender fingers deftly playing the keys. There was a moment of silent

between them, and then…

"Am I going to lose you, Will?"

Will glanced at Hannibal, whose eyes were fixed on the piano. "What?"

"You heard me. If I am to lose you, will you torment me slowly or will you do it quickly, like ripping off a band-aid?"

"Hannibal…"

"Because I'd rather you do it quickly."

It felt like a massive punch to Will's gut, and a tinge of fear crept into his stomach.

"I'm not going anywhere," he said. "Alright? You're not going to lose me."

Hannibal stopped playing for a moment and glanced at him. Will's heart sank when he saw the shimmer of emotion in those amber eyes, the hope dwindling in them like a bulb flickering out. He never wanted to be the cause of that despair.

"Would you prefer I be explicit?" Hannibal asked.

Will didn't know how to respond other than with a nod.

"You always leave me longing for you," Hannibal replied. "I think you know how I feel and use it against me. Perhaps as payback or something else. And I'm willing to give anything just to make you stay. Loving you is the death of me. It kills me everyday."

Those glistening tears in his lover's eyes were like a punch to Will's gut. The guilt Will felt a few minutes ago intensified, admonishing him for being the cause of Hannibal's sorrow. Although Hannibal partly deserved it for his transgressions, it still felt wrong. It felt like it was overdone. Taken too far.

Hannibal continued playing the piano, and Will sat there without words to speak. Unable to utter a single thing that sufficed. Because what could he possible say that could make anything better? He did not know what to do.

And the silence was suffocating.

***

"What the fuck are you talking about?" Michael Clifton spat. "I didn't kill those people."

Across the table from him, Beverly and Will exchanged exasperated glances, unconvinced by the serial killer's words. The chains that bound Michaels wrists to the table rattled with every

movement.

"Really? We gonna do this?" Beverly said. "I don't want to remind you of the three people you've already murdered in the past. The MO of our three recent victims matches the MO of your past murders. Not only that, you just tried to break into a man's house and kill him. Unfortunately, he put up quite the fight and survived. In the scuffle, a piece of your bloody clothing was left behind." She placed a packet with the cloth Gabriel had provided. "That look familiar?"

"Yes, but I haven't broken into anyone's house and killed anyone," Michael said, unconvincingly.

"The evidence is too strong to be ignored," Will said. "Besides, we've been trying to hunt you down for a month. Your biggest mistake was to think you could pull off another ritual of yours without getting caught."

Michael's gaze darted between Beverly and Will before he sniggered. "I see. You guys are just looking for a scapegoat. Someone to take the blame for the murders."

"We don't need one," Will replied. "Why do we, when we have the real deal?"

Michael sniggered. "Oh, I see. This is all because of that Gabriel, isn't it? Oh I fucking am going to destroy that manipulative son of a bitch. I will fucking kill him and rip him apart."

"Glad we got that on tape." Beverly smirked. "Thank you."

"I think there's no use in furthering this conversation," Will said. "We're done here."

Michael's face twisted into an expression of pure malice as he aimed daggers at Beverly and Will. "You think you can keep me in here? I'll be out before you can even blink, and then your days are numbered. I'll make sure to enjoy every moment of cutting you to pieces. I'll make sure I kill you slowly."

"I'm really terrified," Beverly said, nonchalantly.

As Will and Beverly moved to the door, Michael's next words stopped Will.

"It's Doctor Hannibal Lecter, isn't it? The psychiatrist you always go to."

Beverly's gaze was fixed on Will, who slowly turned around to Michael with a demonic glare.

Michael leaned back in his seat and grinned. "I know all about you, Agent Graham, ever since you were trying to hunt me down for a month. I know all about that psychiatrist of yours." He licked his bottom lip. "I can't wait to get to him, and make a spectacle out of him. It would be an absolute pleasure to kill him nice and slow. Maybe I'll torture him a bit, you know? Tie him up like a dog and make him beg."

Hannibal was dangerous and not one to give in to anyone easily. Capturing him wasn't impossible, but Will knew the man would never go down without a fight. He was a monster

that couldn't be taken down with ease.

And yet, that fact didn't stop Will from darting across the room and ramming his fist into Michael's face so hard he drew blood. Beverly rushed to him, grabbing his arms and pulling him away.

"That's enough!" she exclaimed. "He's trying to get to your head, Will. Calm down."

Will fumed, glaring at Michael. "I know."

He stormed out of the room as two other officers stepped in to take Michael away.

Will headed out of the BAU, whipping his hand, trying to ease the pain in his knuckles. He flexed his fingers, then stared at them. He'd dealt with criminals like these a thousand times and he was well aware of how they attempt to mess with his head. He was used to it, so there was no reason for him to lose his temper back there. The only justifiable reason he could think of was that Michael threatened Hannibal.

But Hannibal was a goddamn serial killer. He couldn't care less if anyone threatened him. Neither should Will.

Will's pace slowed.

The only thing his actions proved was his love for Hannibal. That despite knowing Hannibal was tough enough to fend for himself, Will couldn't stand anyone threatening him. He even felt uncomfortable and defensive when Jack suspected Hannibal to be responsible for the recent murders. It scared Will to think of how far he would go for his lover. He had willingly dived into the ocean without knowing how deep it was, or whether he could swim. He had taken a plunge into the abyss that was Hannibal. He had handed the man a blade and trusted him not to stab him.

It was unbelievable, even to him. There was no escaping it. No more running away.

Will was done running.

When he stepped outside the BAU, he was greeted by a face he wasn't sure he wanted to see right now, and at the same time, he couldn't avoid. Gabriel stood there, dapper in a black suit, giving Will whiplash again. Technically, Gabriel did help in catching the serial killer, so… Will probably owed him some gratitude at least.

"I apologize for coming here," Gabriel said. "I didn't actually want to. It's rude."

"It's fine," Will replied. "Thank you for your help. The case is closed."

"Oh." Gabriel sighed slowly. "That's good. I was… paranoid. Thought the killer might come for me because I helped you."

"Good thing we got to him before he did."

"Yes."

There was a strange silence that made Will want to skedaddle out of there, but Gabriel had a hell of a gravitational pull to make Will stay rooted to his spot. He had an undeniable charm, just like Hannibal, but he was softer. Gentler. Intriguing to Will.

"I'm sorry," Gabriel said. "I feel like the last time you came to my house, I chased you away. I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable back there."

"It wasn't you," Will replied. "I had to close the case fast so… had to leave early."

"Would you mind if I made it up to you with a drink?" Gabriel put his hands up. "Just my way of apologizing, is all. One drink. That's it."

One drink. At the very least, Will could use it as an excuse to politely stop meeting him. Since the case was closed, there was no reason to anyway.

"Alright," he said.

"Perfect. Is… eight PM tomorrow alright?"

"Sure."

Gabriel smiled. "Alright, see you then." And left.

The amalgamation of emotions Will felt around the man was frustrating. He hated that a part of him was even intrigued or attracted to the man. He had to remind himself he was already in a relationship. It was all he wanted to focus on.

He stopped at a watch store on the way home. He needed something, a… peace offering of sorts. Something to show Hannibal that he meant more to him than he cared to admit.

Chapter 4

Will pulled his gloves off and dropped them on the coffee table in front of the sofa on his way to the kitchen. As always, he was greeted by Hannibal, with a smile on his face, preparing dinner for the two of them.

"Welcome home, darling," Hannibal said.

It almost seemed like he had forgotten about the morning's events. Will knew better, though.

Will walked to him. "What's for dinner?"

"Double-smoked salmon with Horseradish cream," Hannibal replied. "Wanted to make the best for you, for as long as you decide to stay with me."

Will glanced at him. Hannibal's gaze was fixed on the fish and his countenance was practically indecipherable. Even yet, Will could see the underlying pain in his words, the silent resignation that Will couldn't digest. He'd preferred Hannibal arguing with him about his choices, or always having the last words to everything. Not this.

It felt like Hannibal had given up and Will didn't want that.

He walked around the kitchen counter, to Hannibal. The older man looked at him as he approached.

Will slid a hand over Hannibal's, making him drop the knife on the cutting board. He leaned in so close that Hannibal's attention shifted entirely from the fish to him. There was a glint in his eyes, the way an instant affection took over them every time he looked at Will. They always looked at Will like he was the most stunning creation on earth.

Bringing a hand to Hannibal's face, Will slowly fit his lips into his. Hannibal opened his mouth to let him in, and Will slid his tongue inside. Will savored Hannibal's irresistible lips—always so soft and tender—tugging on his upper lip with his own. He felt Hannibal's hands slide around his waist and gently pull him close to his body. And then he felt that first spark of desire when Hannibal kissed him harder, deeper, with an insatiable hunger that stole the breath from his lungs. His strong arm tightened around Will's waist.

Will broke the kiss and gasped, his mouth half-open as Hannibal's was. All it took was Will’s touch to make Hannibal melt, and his kiss to make him surrender as he did now. Hannibal leaned towards him, pressing eager, hungry kisses to his lips as if to say 'don't stop kissing me.' Will stroked his cheekbones with his thumb and Hannibal closed his eyes with a sigh, nuzzling his face in Will's palm, as though he hadn't felt his touch in decades.

They had sex before but not like this. Not with an earnest ardor as this. *Not with love.* This time, Will had broken the shackles that held him back, ditched the reservations and doubts. He wanted Hannibal to see the love he should've expressed a long time ago, and he wanted to experience the depths of the love Hannibal had for him.

He wanted to see how special he was to him.

Will tugged his black scarf and let it slide off his neck, then removed his gray trench coat, tossing them both on the couch before taking Hannibal's hand and leading him to the table. He gently pulled Hannibal close, placing his hands on the buttons of his shirt, letting him know what to do. Hannibal's enamored, gleaming eyes never left Will's face as he undressed him. Will took a deep breath, feeling the light brush of Hannibal's thumbs on his chest. As Hannibal pushed the shirt over his shoulder, he drew so close that Will could taste him. He opened his mouth slightly and breathed in Hannibal's breath like it was his sustenance.

With a sudden effort, Hannibal lifted Will and sat him down on the table, sealing his lips with a scorching kiss. Will slammed a hand to the table to brace himself as Hannibal pressed his body to his.

Holding Will in place, Hannibal took his hand and pressed it to his chest.

"Touch me," he said, warm breath gusting over Will's mouth. "Everywhere."

Will ran his hand along Hannibal's chest, brushing past the coarse chest hair, then down to his nipples. Hannibal closed his eyes again and sighed, melting into Will's embrace.

"Keep going," he whispered.

It was different this time as compared to the times they had sex before. Will had never really spent the time to touch and feel Hannibal this way. To cherish and love him with no qualms.

Will felt Hannibal quiver a little when he skimmed down his ribs and caressed his waist. From the taut chest to the strong arms, from the barely-there eyebrows to the silver hair, from the cheekbones to the luscious lips, everything about Hannibal was fucking beautiful. Will knew that, but this time he admired it. Noticed it. He kissed the older man’s faint eyebrows.

Hannibal lifted Will's leg and kissed his feet, then dragged his lips along his calf to his thighs, kissing and sucking his inner thigh. Will's breathing shallowed and his pulse pounded as he watched Hannibal move closer and closer to his crotch.

Hannibal took Will's balls into his mouth, sucking on the hard flesh. It sent a tingle shooting up Will's spine and he moaned. Hannibal ran his tongue up his aching shaft in one lick before taking it fully into his mouth.

"Oh God.." Will shuddered, watching his cock sink into Hannibal’s mouth. "Oh, fuck.. Hannibal, yes."

Hannibal sucked hard, placing Will's thighs on his shoulders. Will thrust his hips forward, pushing his cock deeper into Hannibal's mouth. His toes curled from how fucking fantastic it felt. He wondered why he didn't let himself go and truly cherish this before. He dipped his head back as Hannibal savored his cock, his tongue rubbing against the engorged flesh. Hannibal stroked his balls with one hand while he sucked, sending a sweet ache rushing along the length.

"Hannibal," Will gasped, his cock throbbing.

Hannibal circled his tongue around the crown of Will's cock before stroking it with his expert fingers. He lightly pressed a fingernail into the slit, making Will quiver. A white trail of pre-cum rolled onto Hannibal's thumb and he licked it clean before swallowing Will's cock again.

The ache in Will's cock spiked and he tried to hold himself back. He wanted this to last as much as possible, to make up for all the times it had been too short. His body didn't want to listen to him, though. Heat pooled into his pelvis, his cock, then up to the rest of his body. Hannibal could stop him from coming, torment him a little, and Will would've loved it. But Hannibal did nothing of the sort.

A loud guttural sound ripped out of Will’s throat and his muscles tensed as he plunged his cock deeper into the hot space of Hannibal's mouth, spurting down his throat. Hannibal readily swallowed his release, sucking every drop before taking his mouth off and looking up at Will with lust-filled eyes. Will reached down and wiped the trickle of white from the corner of Hannibal's lips.

Of course Hannibal wasn't done yet. Not by a long shot. Will saw white streaks of pre-cum trailing down his veiny cock and dripping to the floor, making his mouth run dry and his cock harden all over again. Hannibal kissed him, sliding his tongue into his mouth so Will could taste himself on it. At the same time, he inserted two fingers inside him.

Will moaned into Hannibal's mouth, clenching around his fingers. Hannibal watched him fall apart bit by bit, with the utmost intrigue.

Will groaned, and it sounded like a plea. "Hannibal, please. I want you inside me. I want you now."

"I'm not about to deny you that." Hannibal dug his fingers deeper into Will's hole, parting the warm, tender, slick muscles. "I’m simply preparing you, my boy, but it seems I don’t need a lot of effort. You’re almost already there."

Will whimpered, worried he might come again. He didn't want to just yet.

Hannibal slowly took his fingers out and licked them clean. "Let me hear you say what you want again."

"You," Will breathed. "I want you."

Hannibal caught the nape of Will's neck, holding him in place, and with his other hand, pushed the wide head of his cock just past the entrance of Will's hole. Will stiffened, trying to take him in but Hannibal stayed just beyond reach.

"God, don't tease me." Will grabbed his hips. "Give it to me."

“Patience.”

Will clearly had none of that.

Hannibal smiled slightly at his restlessness, and plunged his cock a the way in, watching it being sucked in by Will's hole.

The air was pushed out of Will's lungs, and he clung onto Hannibal, grasping at his body as the other drove into him at an increasing pace, until Will could hear the smack of skin against skin. The tip of Hannibal's cock hit Will's prostate, almost splitting him in two and making him yell, but even yet, it didn't seem enough for Will. He wanted the pain, the fullness, the roughness, all of it and more. He wanted Hannibal to tear him apart and put him back together. He wanted to be destroyed and then resurrected. He wanted so much more. Even if he had experienced sex with Hannibal before, this was unlike any of them. Because this time, Will had surrendered to him, emotionally, physically and mentally.

This time, Will gave in to love and it made all the difference.

Hannibal's strong arms gripped Will's waist, pressing him close. His gaze was fixed down at Will's profusely leaking cock, smearing his slickness between their stomachs.

Will hugged him tightly, grunting near his ear. "Harder. Give it to me." His voice cracked. "As hard as you can."

Hannibal sensed the emotion in his voice and felt something wet and warm on his shoulder. His thrusts slowed. "Will?"

There was an exhale of shaky breath, and then… "I'm sorry," Will whimpered softly. "I'm so sorry."

Hannibal gently nudged him back, bringing him to face him. Will's eyes were lowered, shimmering rivulets of tears running down his cheeks.

"Will," Hannibal held his face and wiped his tears with his thumb. "My darling, it's okay."

"I was afraid. I thought you'd lie to me again. That you'd betray me again somehow."

"You needed a reason to trust me."

Will shut his eyes tight and nodded. "I didn't want to hurt you. I don't think I can survive separation."

"My sweet boy…" Hannibal's voice was a whisper now. He kissed Will's tears softly. "Do you trust me now?"

Will nodded again before opening his mouth to kiss him. Hannibal brought their lips together, tasting the salt of Will's tears, along with the sweetness of his lips, and felt the gentle graze of his stubble on his upper lip. And then those blue eyes came to meet Hannibal's amber ones, full of pain and love and longing. An apology with a desperate need for affection and intimacy. It stung Hannibal to see his beloved this way. He reached a hand to caress his cheek.

"Would you ever give up on me?" Will whispered.

"I'd die first," Hannibal replied almost immediately.

Will kissed him this time, hard and fervent, with all the force of his affection. He bound his arms around Hannibal's neck and locked his legs around his hips as Hannibal carried him to the opposite wall. Bracing him against it, Hannibal thrust hard. His fingers dug into Will's thighs, holding him steady. The painful discomfort didn't bother Will, as his brain was solely focused on the powerful strokes of Hannibal's cock, pounding up into him with abandon.

It overwhelmed him so much that every emotion he'd been bottling down inside came bursting forth like a volcano. And the one that raged more violently than the others was love.

Mad, unabashed love.

"I love you," Will blurted.

Hannibal gasped softly, eyes widening a bit when he looked at Will. Perhaps he didn't hear that right. Maybe he was imagining things. Or maybe it really was Will confessing the one thing that Hannibal had been dying to hear for so long.

"What?"

"I love you," Will replied, lips trembling slightly.

Those words gave Hannibal a kind of high no alcohol or drug could achieve, and he wanted more.

"Say it again," he whispered, eyes misting over, as he kept thrusting.

"I love you, Hannibal. I love you so much."

A single tear rolled down Hannibal's eye, and he exhaled a long breath. "How I longed to hear you say that."

"I'm sorry I kept you waiting."

"The wait was worth it. I feel complete. You complete me."

Hannibal slammed into Will, releasing his seed deep inside him. Will came again along with him. Milky ropes spurted from his cock, onto Hannibal's stomach.

Breathing heavily, both of them sank to the floor together. Will pushed Hannibal onto his back and mounted him. Despite sweating and out of breath, Will still wasn't sated. Not yet. Pinning Hannibal's wrists above his head, Will rode him.

Hannibal's cum-soaked cock slid in and out of him easily. He didn't try to move or break free of Will's grip. He lay there, staring up at his lover with a silent awe as if Will was a celestial being. His dreamy gaze was fixed on Will's face while Will drove them into another orgasm. Hannibal snapped his hips up, coming inside Will a second time.

"Oh fuck," Will let out a breathy cry, spilling over Hannibal's chest with spurts of white.

His moans were as delicious as they got. Like music to Hannibal's ears. Ridding himself free of Will's grip, Hannibal grabbed hold of him and brought him to the ground, kissing him deeply, leaving his essence in him. Will was his. No one else's. He wanted to make sure that truth was solidified.

And what a thing of beauty Will was at that moment—shimmering with sweat, at the peak of bliss, chest heaving, and eyes half-open. Lips red and swollen. Hannibal exhaled, taking a moment to feel the satisfaction of finally, truly, having all of him. The barriers between them had come down and there was nothing keeping them apart.

It was all Hannibal wanted.

"You never cease to amaze me, darling," he said, stroking Will's hair.

Will gave a smile that could light up an entire city. "You could have anyone else if you wanted. Occasionally, I suspect I'm a waste of your time—"

"Never say that." Hannibal's tone was stern. "There's a difference between possibility and choice. Yes, it is possible for me to find someone else if I so wished, but that's not my choice. You are like no other, and no other can take your place. I will always choose you."

Will held Hannibal's head and gently pulled him down to reverently kiss his forehead. "Take me to bed."

Hannibal moved off him and stood, pulling him up along with him. With one arm around his back, and the other hooked under his knee joints, Hannibal lifted the profiler into his arms. The weight of his body was welcome. Will bound his arms around Hannibal's neck and rested his head on his shoulder. With a smile, Hannibal carried him upstairs to their room and laid him on the bed. Then settled down next to him.

As Will rolled onto his stomach, Hannibal kissed his spine, just below the back of his neck. Will grinned at him, which Hannibal returned with the widest, most genuine smile he was ever capable of, and nuzzled his nose to Will's cheek. Will had seen him smile before but not like this, with his little fangs peeking out. Seeing the unbridled happiness on Hannibal's face made him happy too. A comforting warmth radiated throughout his body.

Hannibal kissed his way down Will's body, each kiss a brand upon his skin. He pressed his lips to the base of Will's spine before biting his ass cheek, making Will chuckle. Hannibal parted his cheeks with his fingers, licking along the seam of Will's ass, then thrusting his tongue inside to taste him.

Will shuddered, grabbing the bed sheets. "H-Hannibal.”

"Do you enjoy that?" Hannibal asked.

"Very much."

"Good. Get on all fours."

Will obeyed, getting on his hands and knees and flaunting his ass to Hannibal. Pushing it high up for him.

The sight made Hannibal swallow. He had to take a deep breath, splaying his hands over Will's hips. He positioned his cock over Will's hole, shoving it all the way in in one go. He closed his eyes as Will's tender muscles clenched around his cock. Will's cries resounded in his ears. He thrust into him with a steady rhythm before picking up the pace.

Hooking an arm under Will's body, Hannibal suddenly pulled him to sit up, pressing his back flush against his chest. Will gasped as Hannibal's lips brushed against his cheek and his large hand curled around his neck.

"You're mine," Hannibal whispered. "Mine. And no one else's."

"Yours…" was all Will could utter.

Hannibal gripped his neck a little tighter as he pounded into him, grunting at the snug fit. He felt Will's Adam's apple bob under his hand. The intensity of the moment rose to such a mind-blowing level that Hannibal was about to lose whatever grip on reality he had. His heart might explode if this went on, and yet, he wanted it to last longer. He wanted this to go on forever. Just him and Will and no one else. The world could burn to ashes and Will and Hannibal would be the only ones left standing.

Will gasped and whimpered as Hannibal's grip on his neck grew tighter. as Hannibal pummeled into him. He tried to reach down to stroke himself but Hannibal tugged his hand away.

"No," Hannibal growled. "I say when you get to finish."

His voice sent vibrations down Will's chest all the way to his cock, and it throbbed and ached so much. The closer Hannibal got to the end, the wilder and more powerful his strokes became. He bit down on Will's neck hard enough to draw a small trickle of blood. Another growl escaped his mouth as he came, filling Will to the brim with thick spurts of cum until it trickled down his thighs. He reached in front and stroked Will to climax too.

A long, strangled cry crawled out of Will's throat as jets of white shot from his cock and onto the sheets. Onto Hannibal's hand. He shuddered from the release. It seemed to last forever too. He came over and over, spilling heavily and making quite a mess.

Hannibal let go of his neck and the two of them collapsed on the bed. He rolled onto his back on the bed, placing a hand over his eyes as he panted.

"Something tells me that had been long overdue," Will breathed, half-grinning.

"Only because you kept delaying it," Hannibal replied.

Will shifted, lying on his back too. "Alright, I get it. You don't have to guilt-trip me."

"I'm not guilt-tripping you, Will. I…" Hannibal looked at him, eyes slightly teary. "I'm just happy."

Will turned to his side and snuggled near Hannibal, wrapping an arm across his body and feeling his lover’s arms wrap around him like a protective shield. Hannibal's arms were Will's castle. His home, his refuge, his solace. He rested his head on his chest, listening to his frantic heartbeat. Hannibal took a deep breath, exhaling slowly.

This… *them*... took way too long. But it was worth it.

It was worth the wait.

Chapter 5

Will cracks an eye open at the shaft of sunlight shining through the gap in the curtains. It takes a moment for his eyes to adjust before they fall on Hannibal, sleeping peacefully next to him. They'd been sleeping together for so long and yet this was the first time Will actually watched Hannibal in his slumber. Silver hair fell down his forehead, tempting Will to reach a hand and lightly brush the hair away with his fingers.

Unfortunately, that awakened Hannibal.

Will smiled. "Sorry."

Hannibal smiled back. "No need to apologize."

"Good morning then."

"Good morning."

Will snuggled even closer until their breaths mingled. He pressed his lips to Hannibal's.

"I missed this," he whispered. "Can't shake the regret of fighting this for so long. I let my anger and resentment get in the way."

"I told you before, it's no use dwelling in the past."

"Doesn't really get rid of the feelings."

"Will…" Hannibal held his face. "Don't let this moment be marred by guilt. Let us have this happiness. Let me have it." He kissed Will's hand. "Let me have this."

Hannibal leaned over him, gripping his shoulder while kissing his neck.

"Mylimasis…" he whispered.

Will craned his neck up and heaved a contented sigh. "I love you."

"I love you too. I always hoped our love would be etched in stone. Nothing or nobody can erase it and it will stand the test of time. It will remain alive even a hundred years in the future, like an ancient carving, for everyone to admire." Hannibal smiled. "We will live on long after our mortal bodies have turned to dust."

"Doesn't matter where we end up, as long as I get to hold your hand all the way."

Will rolled over and brought Hannibal down to the bed, skimming his thumb over the scar on Hannibal's cheekbone, and the one below his lips. Hannibal reached down and ran his hand along the scar on Will's stomach. Remnants of battles fought and tainted memories of heartbreak. Will just caressed Hannibal's face, feeling the texture of his skin, then his plump upper lip, and received a kiss to his thumb from him.

“Jack Crawford had really roughed you up that day when he found you again. After you had killed Pazzi. The only question I have is why you didn’t fight back. You could’ve stopped him if you wanted.”

Hannibal paused and stared. In this moment, he was vulnerable. In this moment, his walls were no longer up to keep the truth from escaping. So he let it out.

“Separating from you caused an impact worse than I expected. I was numb. Empty. You could say I was lost. I didn’t know what to feel and I wanted to feel something.”

Will’s heart sank. “You took the brunt of Jack’s beating just to feel something?”

“Yes.”

“Why?” Will kissed his lips, his eyelids, then his forehead. “You know I forgave you for that.”

“I do.”

Hannibal couldn’t stop his lips from quivering a bit as tears fell in rivulets down the corners of his eyes. “I refused to admit how much I needed you.”

Will closed his eyes and swallowed the lump in his throat. “And I refused to admit how much I loved you.”

He hugged him, burying his face in his shoulder for a while. This was too painful for both of them but it was necessary. It was a necessary weakness. Will’s heart was overflowing with an unquenchable love for Hannibal now, like he knew he wouldn’t survive without him for real this time.

He pressed his lips to Hannibal’s chest hair before following a path down to his stomach. He heard Hannibal sigh, and saw his chest rise. Wrapping his fingers around Hannibal’s cock, Will rubbed the veiny length with his thumb, then the wide head. He ran his tongue over the slit before sucking it. Will's mouth slid down and covered Hannibal’s cock completely. He continued sucking his way down until he felt the heat radiating from Hannibal's groin.

Hannibal groaned and his chest heaved, his mouth agape and his eyes closed. Will looked up at him and smiled when the older man offered him a small nod. Will pressed his lips against the tip of his cock, then his tongue swirled around it as he slid his hand up his body. He squeezed Hannibal's pecs as he moved down, taking his time to savor the feel of him.

Hannibal let out a raspy gasp as his hips pushed up. His hands clenched Will’s hair so tightly it hurt.

Will got more comfortable on his elbows, wrapping his arms around Hannibal's thighs. He looked up into Hannibal's heavy-lidded eyes, watching his expression. Hannibal grunted and Will could feel a tremor running through him. Will felt Hannibal's wet cock hit the back of his throat and he sucked harder. He began to knead Hannibal's balls as he did, stroking and squeezing the hard and tight flesh.

It was enough. Hannibal's hot release sprayed across Will's tongue, running down his throat. Will gulped down every last creamy drop and kept sucking through Hannibal's orgasm.

Hannibal dropped his hips and panted loudly, stroking Will's hair. Will took his mouth off with a pop and looked at him, wiping his mouth. He kissed the tip of Hannibal's flushed cock before moving back up and kissing his mouth. Hannibal tasted the tangy taste of his own release on Will's tongue.

"Breakfast, my dear?" Hannibal spoke, breathy.

Will chuckled softly. "Yeah. But before that—"

Will slid off him and got off the bed, walking downstairs. He came back with his and Hannibal's clothes and dropped them to the floor near the bed before picking up his own coat. He reached into the pocket and pulled out a box.

"Almost forgot to give you this." He handed the box to Hannibal.

Hannibal received it and opened it, his lips stretching to a smile.

Will shrugged. "I know it's not really as expensive as your tastes would prefer—"

"It's perfect," Hannibal said immediately. "Thank you, Will."

Will gave a small smile before heading to the bathroom. Hannibal couldn't take his eyes off him until Will had disappeared behind the bathroom door.

Hannibal closed his eyes and exhaled. His cock felt wet, cold and tingly. He smiled, putting on the watch Will had gifted him. He sure as hell wasn't going to remove it now. It was his new prized possession.

God, that man drove him nuts.

After a while, the doorbell rang.

"I'll get it." Will pulled his t-shirt and boxers on and padded downstairs, while Hannibal headed into the kitchen.

On opening the door, Will saw a box on the doormat. A gift box. He knelt and picked it up. It had no address or name or any kind of label. His brows pulled together as he untied the ribbon, tore off the wrapper and opened the box.

His heart lurched when he saw a severed head of a man in it. The eyes were closed and the mouth open. Surrounding the head was a ring of black dahlias. His stomach churned, but before he could do anything further, a bullet hit the window next to the door from nowhere and the shattering glass startled Will. He dropped the box and fell back on the ground, eyes wide open and glancing outside, trying to spot the source of the bullet.

Muffled thumping sounded behind him as Hannibal came running. "WILL!"

He dropped to his knees and held Will's face, his fingers splayed out on his cheeks. "Are you hurt? What happened?" He quickly scanned Will's body for wounds.

"I'm fine…" Will kept staring outside.

Hannibal stood and walked outside, looking at the street with eyes like a hawk, trying to spot anything suspicious.

He helped Will to his feet, his eyes laced with worry. "Are you sure you're not hurt, my boy?"

"No."

"I don't suppose this has anything to do with the case you are currently investigating."

"Evidently, it is." Will walks to the severed head and the black dahlias which had now spilled onto the ground outside the door. He picked up one of the flowers and looked at it.

"Is the killer sending you another message through flowers?"

"Maybe. Black Dahlias represent betrayal, don't they?"

"Yes."

Will looked at the flower again. *Was the killer in some way saying that Will… betrayed him?*

His phone rang. He took one look at the caller ID before answering, "Bev. Another body? Let me guess, the head has been severed?"

"Yes," she replied. "How did you know?"

"I'm on my way. I'll explain everything." Will cut the call and glanced at you. "I'm leaving."

"I'm coming with you," Hannibal replied.

"No need. I'm fine. I can handle this."

"I do not underestimate your ability to handle yourself, Will, but that doesn't stop me from being concerned about you."

"I get that but I don't need you coming there, alright? This is my case. I'll be back soon."

Hannibal reached a hand and gently cupped Will's cheek. "Come back home to me."

Will nodded and pressed the briefest of kisses to Hannibal's lips, then left.

***

When Will reached the crime scene, he saw the newest victim. The body was butchered and the head severed. It didn't look like the previous bodies which were carefully embalmed and presented with an artistic flair.

This looked like rage. Like the killer didn't care about presentations anymore. The body was mercilessly cut into pieces.

Beverly glanced at Will. "I can't tell if this is another killer or the same one as before."

"He's not doing this for show anymore," Will said. "Michael Clifton is behind bars, so he couldn't have done this. I'm starting to think he's not our killer. He was telling the truth, though he still deserved to go to prison."

She huffed in frustration. "You gotta be kidding me."

"At first, I thought the previous killings were just the killer expressing himself. But it seemed the messages he was sending all this time were all for me."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because I found this at my doorstep along with black dahlias." Will handed her the box.

Beverly opened the box and looked away. "Jesus. What's with the dahlias?"

"Betrayal. I betrayed him."

She raised an eyebrow. "That doesn't make any sense."

"It doesn't to me either. But I feel I'm about to find out very soon."

He felt his phone vibrate in his pocket and pulled it out. He glanced at the caller ID and sighed. *Not this guy again.* Last night's experience with Hannibal cemented Will's feelings for him so nothing else mattered before. Not even Gabriel.

Will saw Gabriel's name flashing on his phone screen and decided to put an end to this.

"Gabriel," he answered. "Have a good reason for calling me because this is your final contact with me. Whatever you feel about me, it won't lead anywhere. I'm already committed to someone and I can't let him go."

There was a brief silence on the other end.

"I know," Gabriel replied. "I just wanted to have a drink with you one last time. I'm leaving the city tonight."

Will paused. *This was a good thing. At least, he'd be able to leave this strange, awkward chapter behind once and for all.* "Fine. One drink and we're done."

“Alright.” The call ended. Will looked at Beverly. “I’ll be back.”

“Where are you going?”

“Something I need to deal with.”

***

Will reached Gabriel’s house. *Seriously, what was he doing here?* He should turn back immediately, but he'd rather put an end to this charade which had overstayed its welcome. He rang the bell and heard a voice from inside.

"Door's open."

He went in and saw Gabriel preparing a drink. Luggage bags sat near the stairs and plastic sheets covered the furniture. Gabriel wore a beanie and some winter clothes. His appearance still sent a kind of chill down Will's spine, but he brushed the feelings aside. He shut the door behind him and went to the kitchen.

"Where are you headed?" Will asked, wanting to be as polite as possible on their last meeting. He didn't want to part on a bad note.

Gabriel eyed the bags and then returned his gaze to the whiskey in front of him, into which he added a cube of ice. "Somewhere far away from here."

He walked to Will and handed the glass to him, which Will received.

"I understand I was a bit too straightforward," Gabriel said. "I heard the case is still open. I apologize I couldn't help."

"It's fine," Will replied. "You did help put one serial killer behind bars even if he wasn't the one responsible for the murders. He still was a serial killer. An elusive one."

Gabriel took a sip of the whiskey. "I saw you with—" He shook his head, raising his eyebrows. "A man who frighteningly looked like me. Is that your—"

"Hannibal. Yes. He's my…" Will paused, considering what Hannibal really was to him. And even if they weren't officially engaged, he still went ahead and replied, "Fiancé."

"But you don't have a ring."

"I proposed to him first. He's planning on getting me a ring." *This conversation is so bloody awkward.*

Gabriel looked at his glass. "May I be honest? After all, I won't get the chance at a conversation with you again."

"Sure."

"You really struck something in me. I can't tell what it is. I wish I knew. All I can say is that when I first saw you, I wanted to see more of you. I wanted to be around you all the time. If you would call that infatuation or love, it doesn't matter. The reality would remain the same. That I felt something for you. I still do."

Will gripped his glass a bit tighter, trying to keep calm. He had to handle this properly. "I know. But you have to understand that the possibility of anything between us is almost non-existent. Not when I have made a promise to Hannibal."

"I know."

Gabriel stared at Will, almost like he was trying to take a mental photograph of him to keep and preserve forever. Perhaps he was too overwhelmed by those feelings that he had never felt before with anyone, and perhaps they started a conflict within him, he didn't know what it was, but he couldn't stop himself from reaching out to touch Will's curls. They were unbelievably soft.

Will's lips parted and he froze. There was something about Gabriel's touch that caught him way off guard. So much that he couldn't even react.

Gabriel couldn't stop either. He leaned in till their noses brushed, and his lips brushed along Will's cheek to his neck. Will shut his eyes, trying to get his mind straight. His hands trembled and almost lost grip of the glass. The second Gabriel's lips pressed a kiss to his neck, he let go of the glass and it shattered loudly on the ground.

"Enough." He leaned away quickly, backing up. "I think you should leave. Go wherever it is you're going. Goodbye."

Gabriel remained rooted to his spot, his eyes a mix of pain and something else. Something deeper. Will didn't stick around long enough to find out. He hurried out of the house immediately, walking past some gardening tools and some flowers around the house. Whatever happened back there took him by surprise, but it gave him clarity as well. The whole time Gabriel was near him, all he could think about was Hannibal.

He loved him way too much.

No matter how far he strayed, he would always come back to Hannibal. He had chosen him and nobody could take his place. Hell, he was momentarily blindsided by Gabriel solely *because he looked like Hannibal . Everything* reminded Will of his lover. All it took was a few minutes with Gabriel to show him where his heart lay.

Hannibal Lecter. His one and only love. His hell and heaven, his beginning and end.

His destruction and his salvation.

***

When Will reached home, he found Hannibal sitting near his desk and sketching. The watch Will had given him, glinted on his wrist. Hannibal looked up at him and something about his face told Will something was wrong. Will had grown so close to him that he could read his face.

Hannibal turned to his sketches again. “How did your meeting with Gabriel go?”

Will froze. Although that feeling was temporary because it didn’t entirely surprise him that Hannibal would be watching him like a hawk. "You followed me?"

"I wanted to see it for myself. Clearly, you were attracted to him."

Will clenched his jaw. "Well, if you watched me, then you should've seen me push him away."

"Why did you push him away?"

Will narrowed his eyes. "I’m sorry, what the fuck’s that supposed to mean?"

"You remained distant from me all this time, and we had only grown closer recently. I thought I finally had you, Will, but I suppose I don’t. In the time you were distant from me, I can only assume you would grow closer to someone else."

"That's not true! I told you before, you never escape my mind. I pushed him away for that very reason. Because I have you."

"In any other circumstance, you would've let him do whatever he wanted."

Will snapped. "There is no circumstance where you don't exist, Hannibal!"

He let out a frustrated grumble and continued. “Jesus Christ! I went to his house so I could tell him to stop contacting me, and guess what? He’s leaving the city tonight. It was good news to me. If you would just stop misunderstanding me for five goddamn minutes, you’ll realize that when I say I love you, I FUCKING MEAN IT! *You are enough,* Hannibal. You always have been!”

Hannibal let go of his pencil and stared at him, trying to say something but couldn’t. A distinct, fleeting surprise crossed his face and then vanished quickly, replaced with a tinge of regret. He clearly knew he had pushed it this time. His jealousy went a bit too far.

Will sighed and headed to the door. “I need some air.” He went out, slamming the door behind him.

As he walked down the street with his hands in his coat pockets, he didn’t realize the hurried pace he walked in, until the haze lifted and his brain came to focus. The anger subsided after a while and he slowed down, taking deep breaths. There was no point in arguing with Hannibal. They were supposed to start fresh, not regress to their rocky relationship as it was before.

He took in the cold, crisp air, letting it clear his thoughts and bring some calm. He'd walked for forty minutes now, which was more than enough time to let off steam. Turning around, he headed back home. He had to fix this.

...

When he returned home, he found Hannibal in the kitchen, slowly slicing some tomatoes. He seemed distracted. He didn't even look up at Will when he entered, his morose gaze fixed on the tomatoes. The air was so thick and heavy between them, it could be cut with a knife. Will needed to sort things out before it got worse.

"Hannibal, we need to talk." He walked to the kitchen. "We need to set this right. The last thing I want is for things to be ruined when we're just beginning to open up to each other. I don't want us to fight. I want us to have a future."

Hannibal didn't reply. He pushed the tomatoes aside with his knife and picked up a piece of meat. His silence felt terribly wrong to Will, agitating him.

"Are you even listening?" Will asked.

Hannibal stopped and turned to him. "You truly destroyed something good."

Will stilled. An ache rose in his chest, shattering his heart. He didn't think Hannibal's words could tear through him that way, that they could make his very foundation crumble in a simple sentence. A pang of guilt formed in the pit of his stomach too, knowing he had emotionally wounded Hannibal again. This wasn't what he wanted. He didn't want them to go back to what they were before—conflicted and misconstrued.

He moved closer to him and lowered his voice as he spoke. It sounded like a plea. "I'm sorry, okay? But I swear to God, I have no interest in anyone other than you. I love you so much it kills me. Why can't you see that?

Hannibal stared at him for a while, as if studying his face. "I see it clearly now."

It happened way too fast for Will to realize. He caught the brief glint of the knife, and then the feeling of air being knocked out of his lungs as the blade plunged into him. The pain was white hot and Will's eyes bulged in shock as he looked at Hannibal, who remained icy cold in the face of Will's agony. There wasn't an ounce of remorse in Hannibal's eyes and that affected Will too. The blade sliced across Will's stomach and he grunted and groaned in pain, trembling all over as blood ran down his body, his legs, pooling at his feet.

"Ha… Hannibal…" he choked, tears running down his cheeks.

"If I can't have you, then no one can," the older man said before pulling out the knife and letting Will sink to the floor.

Will trembled, backing up to the island counter. He wrapped an arm tightly around his stomach, trying to stem the bleeding. His voice broke as he looked up at the man he no longer recognized. The physical pain was nothing compared to the emotional trauma he felt. The

shock from the betrayal he just witnessed clouded his mind and he couldn't think straight. He couldn't figure out why Hannibal would do this to him, but he didn't know which devastated him more—the fact that Hannibal even thought of stabbing him in the first place or the sheer lack of doubt or regret in his stone-cold eyes.

It was like the man was no longer human. Will had seen that before but he never expected to be hurt by it. Perhaps it hurt because he loved him and was beginning to trust him again.

The older man stared at him. "I have to admit, I do admire your devotion. It was hard to sway you, no matter how hard I tried. If only you had given in, this wouldn't have happened."

Will tried to move, to stop him, wishing he could grab his shirt and somehow stop him, but he couldn't move. Every breath was painful, every movement agonizing. He knew something was wrong about all this. There had to be an explanation. Those moments of profound intimacy they shared, the unmistakable passionate love… it had to be real.

Hannibal loved him. Will knew he did. He was sure of it.

So then, was this Hannibal? Was this man who stabbed him really HIS Hannibal? He couldn't tell for sure, because it felt like him.

Will sat there on the floor, shivering and choking, cheeks wet with tears as he waited to drift off into the blackness. Not knowing why things turned out the way they did. He regretted dying without knowing the answer.

It was possibly the most devastating death he could experience.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal pulled over near the house and got out of his car. Maybe going out on a late-night hunt when he was emotional and not thinking straight was a bad idea. He exhaled, pulling off his leather gloves as he walked in.

And immediately, he picked up a scent he didn't recognize.

He stopped and inhaled the air deeply. He knew what Will smelled like. This wasn't him. It immediately put Hannibal's brain on high alert. He moved silently through the house, following where the scent took him. It seemed to linger stronger as he walked to the kitchen. He heard a soft clang coming from the kitchen, along with a muffled groan.

When he entered, the mere sight of Will and blood made his heart stop.

"Will." He picked up his pace. "Will?!"

He rushed to him, doing a quick scan of his injuries. Grabbing a clean towel from nearby, Hannibal clamped it on Will's stomach.

"Who did this?" he asked Will, bringing a hand to his cheek. His eyes darkened with fury. "I need a name, Will."

Will looked at him, breath shuddering. "... you did."

For a second, Hannibal couldn't believe his ears. His mind worked like an engine. Right after their little scuffle an hour ago and Will had stormed out, Hannibal had left the house too, to clear his head. His tendency to murder someone in order to cool off wasn't exactly as cathartic as he thought it would be. But after he had done the deed, he returned home and found Will like this.

He would never dream of doing this to Will. Not after everything they had been through. Someone must've broken into the house and posed as Hannibal while he was gone.

Then it hit him. And his jaw clenched. There was only one person who could pull this off.

Gabriel.

Of course. *Of course* he would take advantage of his physical resemblance to Hannibal to do something like this. *That bastard.*

Hannibal held Will's face. "Will, look at me. I did not do this. It wasn't me. It was Gabriel." He thought of one way to prove that. He pulled his coat sleeve back and showed Will the watch he had gifted him. "I had this on the whole day today and never took it off. I'm willing to bet he wasn't wearing a watch like this."

Will glanced at the watch and his eyebrows pulled together, as if in realization. His lips trembled as he looked at Hannibal. “I… figured… it couldn’t b-be you… y-you love me…”

“Yes.” Hannibal’s tone was full of conviction. “Yes, I do. I love you too much to hurt you now. I swore I would never hurt you again.”

Will closed his eyes. A wave of panic rushed through Hannibal like cold air as he pulled him into his arms. “No, no, open your eyes, my love. Open them now.”

Will opened his eyes halfway, struggling to breathe. Hannibal knew he had no time to waste. He lay him down on the floor and rushed to grab his medical kit. He didn’t even trust the ambulance to make it on time and he sure as hell refused to let his beloved die.

Will was barely conscious when Hannibal arrived with the kit and immediately got to work.

“Stay with me, darling,” Hannibal urged him as he checked Will’s wound to see how deep it was. “You’ll be fine, I promise.”

Thankfully, the wound didn’t damage any organs but the blood loss was still heavy. Will slipped in and out of consciousness. His vision turned black and it was all he could do to stay awake.

“Will,” Hannibal pats his face hard. “Do not give up on me, now. Let me save you. Don’t let things end this way. Please. Please don’t make me lose you.”

He continued treating Will’s wound with urgency as well as caution, fighting his tears back as long as he could. His heart beat out of his chest and his hands worked with expert efficiency. As if they had a mind of their own.

… Will’s mind drifted into a silent blackness. It was peaceful. No pain, no heartache, no conflict. He felt himself wading into the quiet of the stream and in all honesty, he wanted to stay there. Hannibal’s pleas sounded distant like an echo from across a canyon, growing more distant by the second.

“Will, come back to me.”

“I need you.”

It felt like Will’s body was slowly floating in tranquil space. *This is nice.*

He wanted to stay here forever.

But as tempting as the tranquility was, Will’s heart would always gravitate to the music of Hannibal’s love. It was difficult, painful, complicated, but it was his. Will wouldn’t have it any other way. He would give up peace, happiness, and everything good for a single moment with Hannibal. To be in his arms forever and feel his fingers stroking his curls while Will listened to his heartbeat. Happiness was pointless to Will if it wasn’t shared with Hannibal. His idea of a ‘perfect’ life was to grow old with Hannibal and die together in each other’s arms.

That was his true happiness. It took all his will to stay alive, and he fought to hold on.

Eventually, Hannibal's medical skills snatched Will from the jaws of death. Will gasped sharply, coughing. Hannibal placed a hand at the back of his head for support, an audible sigh of relief escaping his mouth.

"You're okay, darling," he said. "You're okay now."

He gently pulls Will up—taking care of the bandages that have been wrapped around his stomach—and into his arms. He closes his eyes, leaning his head into Will's.

"I refuse to let you go. You are mine." His whispers are slightly shaky. He kisses Will's head. "Death will have to go through me if it wants you."

Will took heavy breaths. Hannibal carried him in his arms and went upstairs. Ever so carefully, as if Will was made of glass, Hannibal set him down on the bed, positioning his head comfortably on the pillow. He made a quick phone call to the ambulance and explained the situation to them. Leaning down, he planted a kiss on Will's forehead.

"Rest, my precious boy," he whispered. "You will be alright. I will be back."

As he turned around, Will reached a weak hand and slowly caught hold of his wrist. "Don't… don't… leave…"

Hannibal had already made his decision on what he had to do next and there wasn't a damn thing in this world that would change his mind.

"I promise I will return," he replied. "And I *always* keep my promises."

Hannibal took his suit and waistcoat off, unbuttoning the first two buttons of his dress shirt as he went back down to the kitchen. He stopped for a moment when he saw the pool of Will's blood on the floor. The sight of it lit a flame within him, making his jaw twitch and his fists clench. It kindled his bloodlust. He selected the biggest knife he owned and stormed out of the house, to his car, and drove straight to Gabriel's home.

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Once there, he pulled over near the sidewalk outside his house and clutched his knife as he went to the door. He tried the handle and much to his surprise, it was open. *Looked like Gabriel was expecting him.*

Pushing the door open, he walked in. His eyes slowly falling on his doppelganger, standing in the kitchen and sipping wine. Right down to the clothes he wore, Gabriel was every bit a replica of him and it unnerved Hannibal. The man had even dyed his hair to match Hannibal's.

Gabriel exhaled slowly. "You took your time." He placed the wine glass on the counter and turned to face Hannibal. "It's like looking into a mirror, isn't it?"

“Possessing my features doesn’t make you superior to me or even my equal,” Hannibal replied. “In the end, all that you are is a cheap imitation.”

“And yet, this cheap imitation got the better of Will Graham. It took me a while to “get in your shoes”. I even had to dye my hair just to convince him I was you. The effort paid off, though. I have to admit, I didn’t enjoy stabbing him. It would’ve been better if he was mine. I would’ve protected him a lot better than you did. Tell me, did he get the dahlias?”

"Was the gunfire at our window a result of you being dramatic?"

Gabriel smirked. "Ah that. I was a bit upset. It was relatively easy pinning the murders on someone else. His biggest weakness and his downfall is you."

Hannibal could already picture all the things he would do to him but there wasn’t enough time. And so the two of them stood glaring at each other, each with the dark drive to kill each other in the most animalistic way.

In a split-second, Hannibal darted towards him with incredible agility. However, Gabriel reacted with the same quick movement, grabbing a kettle and flinging it at the other man. Hannibal dodged the kettle and lunged at him. Gabriel vaulted over the counter and just as Hannibal swung the knife at him, he leaned back and evaded the attack. Grabbing hold of Hannibal’s arm, he wrenched it down and yanked Hannibal to a wall, bashing his face on it.

Hannibal flinched. His face contorted with rage as he retaliated, pulling Gabriel to him and ramming his head into his. For the brief moment Gabriel was stunned by the attack, Hannibal flipped him over his shoulder, smashing him onto a glass coffee table. The table shattered to bits under Gabriel’s weight.

Hannibal grabbed his collar, but Gabriel twisted in his grip and punched him in the gut, then rammed his fist up his jaw, sending Hannibal staggering back. Grabbing a vase nearby, Gabriel smashed it into Hannibal’s head. Hannibal brought his arm up to shield himself, but it proved futile against Gabriel’s unexpected attacks. One massive kick to his midriff sent him falling backwards to the ground.

Gabriel cocked his head from side to side, cracking his neck. “You put up a hell of a fight, I’ll give you that. Anyone walking in through that door would find this trippy.” He grabbed a knife and flipped it in his hand, then craned his neck and exhaled. “I kinda regret stabbing Will. Perhaps I could’ve taken a different route. Oh, well, what’s happened has happened. You can join him in hell.”

He walked to Hannibal with the knife. Hannibal clenched his jaw as he shot a kick to Gabriel’s calf. When the other fell to his knees, Hannibal shot another kick to his face. There was a surge of adrenaline, something fueled by pure, unadulterated rage that drove his movements. He sprang to his feet, grabbing Gabriel’s arm just as the other tried to stab him. With a sudden force, he wrenched his arm backward and broke it. A loud yell of pain tore from Gabriel’s throat.

Hannibal coiled an arm around Gabriel’s neck, locking him in a chokehold. His silver hair fell down his eyes and blood streamed down his nose, tainting his lips red. Gabriel choked

and tried to pry Hannibal's arm away with his good arm.

Hannibal brought his mouth close to his doppelganger's ear and uttered in a low growl. "Will. Graham. Is. MINE."

With that, he snapped Gabriel's neck and let his limp, lifeless body drop to the ground. The knife fell with a clatter to the ground.

Hannibal stood there like a creature who had just destroyed a city and remained standing when everything had reduced to rubble around him. He stared at the dead body in front of him with dark eyes that blazed with pure malice and heavy breaths that heaved from his chest.

For as long as he was alive and breathing, nobody could ever have Will.

He crossed Gabriel's body and left the place.

***

Will took a slow breath, opening his eyes. His throat was parched. With a slow exhale, he turned to Hannibal, sitting on a chair beside his hospital bed.

"Gabriel," he spoke in a hoarse voice.

"Taken care of," Hannibal replied. "You needn't worry about anything now."

Will stared at nothing. "Maybe I should've seen the signs. I should've known he would do something like this. If I was thinking straight, maybe I would've figured out it was him. Still… it felt like… it was really you stabbing me. If you wanted, you would. Like you did before."

Hannibal sighed. "I admit I have faltered in the past but you can't possibly use my past as a basis to judge me for the present, otherwise neither of us would truly move on. I can't say I've never hurt you before but I promise you now that I will protect you till my last breath. I swear this on everything I hold sacred. And I am asking you to let me prove that. Let me spend the rest of my life making up for all the things I did. You seek a future for us too. I know it."

"I admit that I can't imagine a life without you, even if I wanted to."

Hannibal gave a nod before reaching into his pocket and taking out a blue box, opening it to reveal a platinum ring. "Consider this proof of the oath I made to you just now. Will you marry me, Will?"

Will's lips part in surprise. The recent events had been a roller-coaster of a ride but he couldn't let Gabriel's deception influence his choices. He was making a huge decision. There

was no going back.

Then again, Will was and always would have an affinity with the darkness. With Hannibal.

He paused for a few moments before slowly raising his hand in response, letting it out for Hannibal. The slightest of smiles appeared on Hannibal's face as he gently held Will's hand and pushed the ring onto his finger, then pressed a kiss on it.

"I will never let you down," he said. "No matter what happens. Even if this world reduces to ash, I will hold your hand all the way through."

"I'm counting on it," Will replied. "It's a delicate thread we're tethered to."

"It's a thread I will hold on to."

It wasn't simple. Any of this. But if either of them dwelled on the past, then there was no possibility for second chances. Giving a second chance took a lot of trust and for Hannibal and Will, trust was a delicate, complicated thing. And their love was a mosaic.

Broken but beautiful.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading <3 Hope you guys liked this

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